

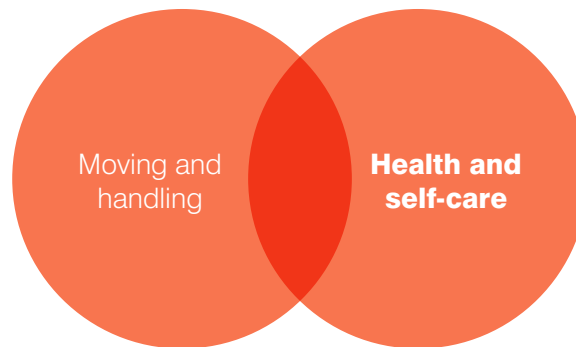


# Physical Development: Health and self-care

## Introduction

Physical Development (PD) is one of the **three prime areas** of learning in the EYFS framework, the other two being Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) and Communication and Language (CL). These three areas are recognised as prime because they form the basis of all other aspects of young children's learning and development. The three prime areas are regarded as particularly important for inspiring young children's curiosity and enthusiasm, laying the foundations for future success in all aspects of life and education.

In the EYFS, **Physical Development** covers two interrelated aspects:



**Health and self-care** covers how children can be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

The **moving and handling** aspect of physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive and to develop their coordination, control and movement.

### Early Years Physical Activity Guidelines (Dept. of Health 2010)

- Physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and water-based activities in safe environments.
- Children of pre-school age who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.
- All under fives should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except when sleeping).

## Prime and specific areas of learning

The **three prime areas** of the EYFS should be the focus for practitioners working with the youngest children, as these form the basis for successful learning and progress in the **four specific areas**.

As children get older the emphasis will shift towards a more equal focus on **all areas of learning** as children's confidence and abilities increase.

If at any time a child's progress within any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, practitioners should discuss this with the child's parents and provide focused support in that area. This approach is designed to ensure that any issues are addressed at an early stage of a child's life.

## Developing young children's awareness of health and self-care

To enable young children to become more aware of the importance of staying healthy, and to help them build their skills in looking after themselves, it is important that practitioners create an emotional and physical environment that:

- encourages healthy eating and physical activity, but also values time and space for rest and sleep
- gives children the time and opportunity to learn how to manage their own dressing and toileting needs
- provides opportunities and support so children can learn how to keep themselves safe.

Providing nutritious, healthy food at snack and mealtimes, and making mealtimes enjoyable social occasions will give children very positive messages about the role of food in our lives and the importance of healthy eating. This is an ideal opportunity to enable children to make choices and try new experiences, laying down good habits for the future.

By creating a balanced rhythm to the day with opportunities for children to make choices, engage in vigorous movement and physical activity in and out of doors, and with time aside also to rest, reflect, and sleep, practitioners will be giving young children powerful messages about how these activities contribute to a balanced healthy lifestyle.

Learning how to put on a coat or shoes, or manage a trip to the toilet on your own takes time and lots of practice. It is vital that the routines and organisation of the setting support individual children in achieving these milestones despite the time it may take.

Opportunities for children to learn how to keep themselves safe are vitally important. Well developed self-management skills, and an understanding and awareness of how to assess and manage the risk involved in any particular situation, are essential life skills. Giving children the opportunity to develop and practise these skills provides them with a firm base from which to go out and explore the world safely.

## Progress in PD: Health and self-care

### 24-36 months

*Children can communicate their physical needs for things such as food and drink and can let adults know when they are uncomfortable. They are beginning to be independent in self-care, such as by pulling off their socks or shoes or getting a tissue when necessary, but still often need adult support for putting their shoes and socks back on, or blowing their nose.*

### 36-48 months

*Children can recognise and express their own need for food, exercise, the toilet, rest, and sleep. They can put on a jumper and coat with little assistance and can fasten big buttons. They usually have bladder and bowel control and can attend to most toileting needs most of the time themselves.*

### Early Learning Goal

*Children know the importance for good health of physical exercise, and a healthy diet, and talk about ways to keep healthy and safe. They manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently.*

[Statements from Draft EYFS Framework, 2011]

## The relationship between Physical Development and the other prime areas of learning

*'Physical Development supports Personal, Social and Emotional Development as increasing physical control provides experiences of the self as an active agent in the environment, promoting growth in confidence and awareness of control. It supports Communication and Language because a child who can effectively use the large movements, gestures and the fine movements involved in speech is able to convey messages to others.'*

[Tickell Review of the EYFS, 2011]

## Summary of development for two-year-olds

When a child is aged between 24 and 36 months, practitioners must review progress in Physical Development, along with the other two prime areas of learning. Parents or carers should be given a short written summary of their child's development as part of the on-going dialogue between the setting and the family. This summary should identify any areas where the child's progress is less than expected, and should shape a targeted plan to support that child's future learning and development in the setting.

There will be no standard format for this developmental summary – instead it should reflect the culture and ethos of the setting and the particular needs of the child and/or parental preferences.

## What quality looks like in practice

*The three scenarios below describe the environment and practice in a nursery attached to a children's centre, located in a culturally diverse area of the country.*

### Under twos

Practitioners in the baby and toddler rooms are very aware of the importance of keeping the room clean and tidy and making sure that the toys and resources that the children play with are clean and well looked after. They are not obsessive about this but they all understand how diseases and infections can be spread, so they keep surfaces clean, sterilise bottles and teats, and wash their hands before and after feeding a baby and after changing nappies. The nappy changing area is a bright, tidy place with everything stored close to hand, and the bins are emptied regularly.

Babies and toddlers are encouraged to enjoy activities that involve exploring materials such as gloop, paint, jelly, or honey which inevitably get them 'messy'. While cleaning them up afterwards, practitioners talk about hand washing and demonstrate how to do this properly, giving the children a good role model to follow.

Drinking water is available throughout the day and snack times are organised so children can try out a range of different foods, helping themselves to what they would like to eat. Child-sized portions of fruit and vegetables are available and the older toddlers often enjoy helping the practitioner to prepare the snack. Hand washing is a regular part of the pre-mealtime routine, and practitioners also take care to make sure that children's faces and hands are clean after meals.

In the baby room sleeping and eating patterns follow an individual baby's routine, and there are also floor level sleep nests that the children can crawl into to rest. After lunch, most children have a sleep to reinvigorate themselves for the rest of the day.

### Two- to three-year-olds

At mealtimes children use real crockery and glasses as practitioners feel this is the best way to help children to learn how to use these safely. Wherever possible, children manage their own meals and are encouraged to try a variety of foods.

The children's toilets are next to the home base and are equipped with potties, low level toilets, steps, and child height wash basins. Practitioners oversee visits to the toilet, helping where necessary, and supervise hand washing and drying so children quickly come to see this as a part of the 'toilet routine'. The toilet area is kept clean, sweet smelling, and tidy, and bins are emptied regularly.

Children play outside every day, and putting on coats and shoes can take up a lot of time but practitioners see this as an important part of the children's learning experience and only assist when absolutely necessary. They are quick to praise children's efforts to be independent.

The outdoor area contains lots of exciting spaces to explore – slopes to climb up and roll down, flat spaces to run around, and places to dig – but there are also quiet areas in which to sit down and rest. Children are encouraged to build their physical skills and confidence by taking on small challenges such as jumping off a low bench or running down a slope. Practitioners know the children they work with well and understand the level of challenge that are appropriate for different individuals.

### Four- to five-year-olds

Mealtimes are important social occasions in the nursery which practitioners use as opportunities to encourage children to try new foods and learn about healthy eating, as well as times for conversation and enjoying being part of a social group. Children's independence is promoted by helping to set the tables and to clear away, and by being able to serve themselves. Meals are cooked on the premises by a qualified cook who is up to date with the latest guidelines from the School Food Trust.

The day is organised to give children plenty of opportunity and encouragement to follow their own interests, out of doors as well as indoors. Practitioners keep a close eye on what the children in their key groups are doing

to ensure that over the course of the day they experience a good mixture of sedentary activities and vigorous active play. There are times to dance and move to music, as well as opportunities to be active outside, and story time regularly turns into an exciting and creative performance session. Large cushions in one corner of the room provide a quieter, calmer space when children feel in need of a rest or sleep.

Parents are encouraged to make sure their children are dressed in clothes that they can manage easily themselves. Putting on and taking off coats and shoes or boots happens regularly as children go outdoors and back again, so there are plenty of opportunities to practise dressing skills. The toilets and wash basins are located down a short corridor so children often visit with a friend – an advantage on the few occasions when they need extra help.

Throughout the nursery there are opportunities for children to use tools and equipment and to learn new skills. Practitioners spend time showing children how to use these safely, and talk with children about the dangers associated with not using things properly. This helps children to understand how to assess risk and understand what to do to keep themselves safe.

The outdoor environment has places to run or ride around, space to throw or kick a ball, small spaces to explore, and a wooden climbing frame that presents a number of exciting challenges. As children play, practitioners talk to them about potential risks in different situations and how to avoid them. This helps children to develop their skills and to learn how to avoid danger.

## How to help young children to manage their health and self-care

Use these reflective questions to think about how you provide opportunities for young children to learn how to manage their health and self-care.

### Under twos

- When did we last review our policies and procedures for the control of infection?
- Do we all really understand how to put the policy into practice?
- Are there ways we could reorganise the nappy changing area so it easier to use and to keep clean?
- Do we all share the same attitude to providing 'messy' activities for young children?
- Could we find a way to let toddlers be more independent at snack and meal times?
- How could we find out more about the latest guidelines on healthy eating for young children?
- How good are we at encouraging young children to be adventurous and to actively explore their environment?
- What more could we do to share information with parents about the importance of physical activity and healthy eating?

### Two- to three-year-olds

- How could we make mealtimes more enjoyable, relaxed occasions?
- Are there any improvements we should make to the range of food available for meals and snacks?
- Is there anything we need to change in our arrangements for sleep time?
- Would any changes to the nappy changing/toilet area help children to become more independent?
- How much do we value children learning how to dress themselves, and do we give them enough time to do this?
- How could we change the outdoor environment to give younger children small challenges they can master?
- Do we know individual children well enough to know what level of challenge is appropriate for them?
- Can we find ways to help parents see how they could help their child to become more independent?

### Three- to four-year-olds

- Do we all share the same view on the importance of mealtimes?
- How could we organise the space and routines to make mealtimes better?
- Are there ways we could change the layout of the room to create some cosy areas for rest and relaxation?
- Do we always know which children have been active during the day and who has been largely sedentary?
- Could we organise things better so children can be more independent in going to the toilet and dressing to go outside?
- Could we find more interesting and challenging resources for the children to explore indoors that would develop their skills and abilities?
- Is the outdoor space well provided with interesting and exciting challenges that will help children learn how to manage risk?
- How well do we help parents to understand the importance of children developing their ability to assess risk, and learning how to keep themselves safe?

## Ideas for parents

### Physical development

For young children, Physical Development is made up of two aspects: **health and self-care** and **moving and handling**.

- **Health and self-care** covers how to help children to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy food choices.
- **Moving and handling** is all about helping young children to be active and encouraging them to develop their coordination, control, and movement.

### Guidelines on physical activity

The latest recommendations from the Department of Health are that:

- Physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and safe water-based activities.
- Children of pre-school age who are walking should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.
- All children under five should minimise the amount of time spent sitting down for extended periods, except when sleeping.

### Helping your child to be healthy and to care for themselves

The best way to help children to be healthy and to learn how to care for themselves is by:

- encouraging them to eat healthy food and to be physically active
- making sure they get plenty of rest and sleep
- helping them to learn how to dress themselves and to go to the toilet on their own
- giving them the opportunity and support to learn how to keep themselves safe.

You could use the ideas below as starting points to help you to do this.

#### **Under twos**

- Play music to encourage your baby to be active and move his arms and legs around.
- Help your baby to settle into a regular pattern of sleeping and eating.
- When your baby starts to eat solid food, let him try helping to feed himself.
- Help your toddler to learn how to wash his hands before mealtimes.
- Don't be put off 'messy activities' – hands and faces wash easily.
- Keep your home safe with stair gates, fire guards, and cupboard locks.
- Explain to your toddler why some things are dangerous so he begins to understand why he shouldn't do them.

#### **Two- to three-year-olds**

- Fruit and vegetables are healthier snacks than crisps and biscuits.
- Try to find time for your child to play outside every day.
- Plan a regular routine, particularly at bedtime, so your child gets enough sleep.
- Choose coats and shoes that are easy to fasten and undo.
- Give your child time to dress herself and don't always do everything for her.
- Be patient when your child is 'potty training' and be prepared for some small accidents.
- Help your child to take on small physical challenges to build her skills and confidence.

#### **Four- to five-year-olds**

- Encourage your child to try lots of different healthy foods.
- Make time during the day to be active – you could dance indoors or run around outside.
- All children need quiet times during the day when they can rest and recover their energy.
- Encourage your child to choose the clothes he is going to wear and to dress himself.
- A small step and a child sized toilet seat can make going to the toilet much easier.
- Rather than stopping your child from doing things, help him to learn how to manage risk for himself.
- Be a good role model for healthy eating and being active.